

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 03805 011248Z
ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 JUSE-00 SCA-01 L-03 SSO-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2331

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FOR DEPT OF JUSTICE - L.W. CHAMBLEE, J/CRIM.

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, (BARKHORDAR, MOHAMMED)

SUBJ: U.S. VS. MANAFZADEH: REQUEST FOR WITNESSES MOHAMMED

BARKHORDAR; HOSSEIN SHERIKAT, BANK MELLI

REF: STATE 097220

1. EMBOFF SPOKE WITH MOHAMMED TAGHI BARKHORDER MORNING MAY 1 TO
REQUEST THAT HE TRAVEL TO U.S. TO TESTIFY AT TRIAL OF EKRAM MANAFZADE
H.

BARKHORDAR EXPLAINED THAT WHILE HE IS WILLING TO TELL EMBASSY EVERY-
THING HE KNOWS ABOUT THE CASE, HE SIMPLY IS TOO BUSY TO TRAVEL TO
NEW YORK TO TESTIFY ON A MATTER IN WHICH HE IS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED.
HE SAID THAT FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS IN TEHRAN WITH CHASE MANHATTEN
OFFICIAL (MICHAEL P. ELZAY, VICE PRESIDENT, CHASE MANHATTAN INTER-
NATIONAL, 410 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK), HIS UNDERSTANDING OF CASE IS
AS FOLLOWS. APPARENTLY EKRAM MANAFZADEH PRESENTED FRAUDULENT
DOCUMENTATION TO THE EFFECT THAT ONE MEHDI HOSSEIN BARKHORDAR WOULD
GUARANTEE THAT SUFFICIENT FUNDS EXISTED TO PAY THE CHECKS. BARKHORDA
R

SAID FLATLY THAT NO SUCH PERSON AS MEHDI HOSSEIN BARKHORDAR EXISTS.
BARKHORDAR SAID THAT HE KNEW EKRAM MANAFZADEH SEVERAL YEARS AGO
AND THAT MANAFZADEH "IS A BAD PERSON" WHO HAS BEEN IN JAIL IN IRAN
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MANY TIMES. "CHASE MANHATTAN MADE A SERIOUS MISTAKE" HE SAID, "IN
ALLOWING WITHDRAWAL BEFORE THE CHECKS HAD CLEARED." ALTHOUGH EMBOFF
MADE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT INSTANT REQUEST COMES FROM U.S. ATTORNEY
'S
OFFICE AND NOT CHASE MANHATTAN, BARKHORDAR--PRESSED TO GO TO NEW
YORK TO TESTIFY--NEVERTHELESS STILL DECLINED.

2. EMBOFF THEN ASKED MR. BARKHORDAR IF HE WOULD AGREE TO REP OF U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE COMING TO TEHRAN AND PUTTING QUESTIONS TO HIM ON THE CASE. BARKHORDAR READILY ASSENTED TO THIS, INCLUDING AGREEMENT

TO HAVING HIS RESPONSES TAKEN DOWN IN WRITING. (NOTE: MOHAMMED TAGHI BARKHORDAR'S ENGLISH IS NOT PARTICULARLY FLUENT AND EMBOFF DID NOT RPT NOT USE TERM "LETTERS INTERROGATORY" IN ADDRESSING QUESTION OF BARKHORDAR'S WILLINGNESS TO STATE TO REP OF U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT THE MATTER.) EMBASSY HAS KNOWN BARKHORDAR WELL AND FAVORABLY FOR MANY YEARS. HE IS VERY PROMINENT BUSINESSMAN, REPRESENTATIVE FOR NUMBER OF GE LINES AND HAS CONSIDERABLE STATURE IN TEHRAN BUSINESS CIRCLES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD RENEGE ON PLEDGE TO COOPERATE WITH REP OF U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE HERE IN TEHRAN

HE WAS QUITE FRANK IN DISCUSSING WHAT HE KNOWS OF CASE WITH EMBOFF, WHICH MORE OR LESS CENTERS IN HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT CHASE MANHATTAN WAS BILKED FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF FRAUDULENT DOCUMENTATION BY MANAFZADEH.

3. EMBASSY HAS NOT RPT NOT GONE TO GOI ON THIS CASE, SINCE LATTER HAS NO MEANS TO COMPEL BARKHORDAR TESTIMONY IN NEW YORK. EMBASSY BELIEVES WE CAN SAFELY ASSUME THAT WHEN GOI LEARNS THAT BARKHORDAR IS WILLING TO STATE WHAT HE KNOWS HERE IN TEHRAN, GOI WOULD THEN TAKE NOT UNREASONABLE POSITION THAT THIS OUGHT TO BE SUFFICIENT FOR USG PURPOSES. IF WE ASKED GOI TO INTERVENE, NOW THAT WE KNOW OF BARKHORDAR'S UNWILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL TO NEW YORK, WE RUN REAL RISK OF IRRITATING MR. BARKHORDAR TO POINT THAT HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MIGHT DECLINE TO COOPERATE ANY FURTHER.

4. EMBOFF ALSO SPOKE MORNING MAY 1 WITH MR. LEVON DJANECE, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF BANK MELLI (POSITION HOSSEIN SHERKAT HELD BEFORE TAKING NEW YORK ASSIGNMENT WITH BANK MELLI) AND WHO IS SHERKAT'S SUPERIOR. DJANECE SAID HE HAS HEARD NOTHING RPT NOTHING CONCERNING REQUEST FROM SHERKAT FOR PERMISSION TO DISCUSS THIS CASE WITH U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND SAYS THAT HE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE HEARD HAD SHERKAT SO REQUESTED PERMISSION. HE SUGGESTED, AND EMBASSY WOULD CONCUR ON THIS COURSE OF ACTION, THAT SHERKAT SEND A CABLE TO BANK MELLI STATING: (1) WHAT HE KNOWS OF THE CASE; (2) WHAT HE UNDERSTANDS U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MIGHT ASK; AND (3) REQUESTING PERMISSION TO DISCUSS CASE. DJANECE SAID RESPONSE WILL BE MADE EXPEDITIOUSLY BY BANK MELLI, AFTER ROUTINE CHECKING WITH CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY SHERKAT WOULD BE ALLOWED TO DISCUSS CASE. EMBASSY WILL BE HAPPY TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO ACCELERATE EXPEDITIOUS/RESPONSE TO SHERKAT'S CABLE ONE IT IS RECEIVED HERE.

MIKLOS

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